

No,  
Dear

No, Dear

Issue 4

*Pants*

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Emily Brandt

Deep blue

I was one of those girls who used pliers  
to zip their flies. I had bad teeth  
and ugly jeans; a hair dryer

blowing incessantly, a small dog  
snapping at my ankles,  
my ankles tucked neatly into white socks.

I combed my hair, whirring in clouds  
of wind, with a sewing needle,  
some thread. I wove in blackberries

and blackbird feathers, and beaks,  
and Jessie's model ship,  
and buttons from the button box,

and dollhouse tables, even  
a salt lick from the stables  
where I liked to lay in hay.

Ben Fama

We Don't Need Boats, We Swim

The roads we use  
have not been completed  
by the children we saw  
working, some holiday  
of clothing, melted crayons,  
dirtbikes pitched into the grass.

I tried to be easy  
but the mechanisms kept saying  
passengers, watch your exits  
I did the right thing, leaving  
this behind. Now anything is  
possible if I close my eyes  
and call you Cara. And who  
hasn't at some point felt  
'over it,' that is, lifted their  
pants up passed their boots  
and found only "?'s" where  
their spurs were.

You brought a plant home that  
sits in the window.

You called it a wish-giver.

It blooms in fits  
makes me nervous.

Katie Fowley

To skirt is to move around the ring of a thing, like the skirt skirts me, or circles me. To skirt is to hoop and bubble, to be savvy and circuitous, or to flirt. In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, it left the dress for bigger, brighter things. In the 50s men went chasing skirts, who took a powder and changed into blue jeans.

I'm in a blue, blue mood. Not rock n' roll. Not rockabilly. Just blue on top of blue. You could call it navy; give it a difference. The leg is a fickle sport. It wants to be hugged. It ripples about the knee where the itch begins. You're riveting in blue jeans with cat whiskers painted on the crotch. Worn to individuate, to get a hot date. How we fabricate distress. Blue face and gray fill. Such endless possibilities for fading. Such sturdy twill. Blue is the wallet, the card shark, the pocket. The pocket is a precious thing. For taking things out and putting things in.

First, lady bicyclists donned pantaloons. Then Paul Poiret made a splash when he started dressing women in stylish pants. To breach the matter is to jump over it like a lady on a horse. Oh Paul Poiret, we've gone astray. We used to balloon. We used to be slack and roughly hewn.

Meghan Guss

Nude Beach

I've always been a late bloomer,  
so I was still wearing them.

We had arrived over-dressed,  
a problem that was compellingly remedied.  
My partners in crime seemed seasoned  
and were instantly and magically naked.  
Startled by their blatant humanity,  
I fixed my eyes on the horizon and embarked.

Each piece was a deliberation,  
absolutely nothing was frivolous,  
as if I were losing at strip poker.  
Left earring, right earring.  
One shoe at a time.  
Desperate, I removed the gum from my mouth,  
the tie from my hair.  
I stood in my suit amongst an exposed population.

With a swallow and a sigh  
I ripped off my top like a band-aid  
showing the world the tender concretions  
of a traumatic pubescent incident.  
Nobody was impressed.

A daring glance found me before  
a mantle of mountains, jagged and bare,  
tipped with white. I was veiled  
in brightness, voices obscured  
by the sea, and soon was lulled  
into the naked landscape.  
Hard-core scenery, unparalleled,  
and I among it unappareled.

A man approached me, as if from a mirage,  
sold me beer from his fanny pack.  
He made conversation and I did not look at his penis.  
"Enjoy Vancouver and let me know if you want any acid," he said.  
Immediately following I became debriefed.

I tried on the ocean and it fit perfectly.  
The sand covered me in khaki.  
A friend wore his guitar, asked for requests.  
I told him to play a song without his G-string.

Matt Reeck

Acknowledgments Poem

*thank you to the computer for it makes me feel quick & professional, thank you to the airplanes that have brought me to foreign lands, thank you to box turtles & the snapping turtles of Kansas, thank you for my cranium lest I were a sea slug on the sea floor, thank you domestic cats & the generations that domesticated them, thank you to the table saw engaged to make this furniture, thank you for the windows all the better to see the lawn from, thank you for the blankets knitted by skillful, handy people, thank you too to machines but thank you not for their dominance, thank you to the Christmas lights that glow this December morning, thank you Lisa Jarnot for the poetry & the person, & thank you too to snow, a true, ahistorical pleasure, thank you thus to coffee beans & cocoa grown in Mexico, thank you correspondingly to friends who find time to write me letters, thank you to the caribou whose female too sports horns, thank you to cars which provide a moving vantage, thank you to the Lumière Brothers who invented the modern cinema, thank you driveway basketball which made childhood more enduring, thank you too to Africa, whose century will come some day, thank you to parapets, thank you to Q-Tips & and kudos too to condoms, thank you to apartments since I've never liked to hammer, & thank you as well to denim which makes clothing myself much easier, thank you to candles & appurtenances of lighting, thank you to glasses so I may see the people on the street, thank you thus to dentists for their sage wisdom concerning teeth, thank you to the major poets and minor poets too, the minor major & major minor & minor minor too, thank you to the razor blade that removes the beard from my face, & thank you to the lubricants that make this removal possible, thank you to bagels devised by*

*German bakers, thank you too to dermatologists, nothing more need be said, thank you to the sauropods which bring humans down to size, thank you to the extra-ordinary & ordinary way of things, thank you to screws & joiners of sundry nature, thank you Chinese restaurants in American backwater towns, thank you too to nail clippers & flyswatters for the flies, thank you to readers of those things we call books, thank you to thermal underwear & woolens including socks, thank you too to orange juice, thank you to the New Year so that the world may continue to continue, thank you to pencils which feel good in my hand, thank you polar ice caps as you keep the seas contained, thank you Louis Pasteur for I enjoy most dairy products, thank you to cameras & arms used to hold them, thank you to the earth & our place in the solar system, thank you as well to the chalk of the cliffs in Dover, England, thank you to ink if and when not poisonous to the environment, thank you to secrets which allow us to admire others, thank you to the restless who defy the status quo, thank you to rain boots so my feet stay dry in April, & thank you Homo erectus a needed stage before this poem, thank you for my teeth for they begin the digestive process, thank you to earrings which adorn women's ears, thank you to Kowloon & its decrepit Chung King Mansion, thank you too to celery, thank you too to wolves, thank you too to Scrabble though "bling" really is a word, thank you to the vineyards of sunny California, thank you Kit Smart, there's something to be said for madness, thank you too to blinkers which advise drivers on safe conduct, thank you to meditation which is among the highest blessings, thank you to furnaces, morning walks & constitutinals, thank you to my parents who brought me into this world, & thank you to conclusions that end what comes before*

Christopher Hirschmann

Work Clothes

On the perfect white walls  
of a Fifty-seventh Street gallery,  
lighted by discreet baby spots  
installed at considerable expense,  
by one of the city's foremost  
theatrical lighting designers,

hangs a collection of Japanese  
work clothes, worn by the poorest  
of cold northern farmers.

Cotton dipped oftenest  
in hot indigo dye goes deepest blue –  
one expanse, whole cloth  
about four feet square, looks  
like a night sky stitched with stars,  
whole constellations in the corners  
and a random galaxy throughout.  
It was used to carry  
grains, seeds, babies,  
and belongings when  
its owners had to flee disaster.

The others are jackets and trousers  
layered, quilted, stitched,  
scraps as small as three fingers  
saved, cleaned, readied, sewn  
together against cold and wind,  
because nothing must be wasted,  
such is the commandment.

Kyle Schlesinger

AWOL  
for Brenda

Hip tease straight to  
Uppercut who gets  
Placebo heady times  
Bonafide chops all  
Bets are off smack  
Dab in proportion  
To human interest  
Story whoop whoop  
Grand ol' Marxist days  
Laurels befall tenure  
History you can write  
In bright green crayon  
But you can't own  
Language someone you  
Thought you knew  
Brings you back to the  
Stats gauge pant pant  
Doesn't everybody look  
Great everyone parties  
Little throb old flame



Marty Northrop

A PAIR

What's finely cracked may seem waste,  
But shudder-clutching hands sure scream waste.

Cold, open ocean, surface slick with chum:  
A carnival of hake, herring, bass, and bream waste.

The currents of venom we won't let stir the surface  
Rise gently as Manhattan streets leak steam waste.

You could string a poem with all this noise,  
These littered syllables, this trite phoneme waste.

The names we shed like blood while of this dance—  
The Abram-into-Abraham-into-Ibrahim waste.

OF GHAZALS

The empty blouse made her absent waist seem  
As empty as the past makes the disgraced seem.

Like some have a tin ear she's a tin heart,  
Though I'm the only one her jilts made chaste seem.

The patrons of guilt have left off from your favor.  
To the old victims, how must the once-Mace'd seem?

All art teaches by accident. A blot, a hunger,  
A hang-up, a theory. "How frozen the chased seem."

A father who these latest days thinks only  
*How wicked these same children now displaced seem.*

Emma Alabaster

every poem is you, brooklyn

i swear this platform shakes  
as wind blows over Mcdonald Ave  
we wait, spitting into space,  
staring at tops of brick apartments, warehouses  
selling wooden doors and tombstones.  
here someone has written

*Hiroshima ain't nothing compared*  
—never finished or maybe obscured  
by illegible tags, making this line's neat print  
all the more glaring.

i reentered this city on my own,  
a shrinking circle of daily listening,  
expanding net of unknowns—  
a best friend crying beside me  
on a bench on a street near childhood.  
we are grown and i don't know if she wants  
to be held (i always do.)  
the bodies around us keep moving  
talking of how it smells like rain,  
getting in and out of cars, carrying groceries,  
talking loudly, adjusting their clothes.

i swear i have been here most my life—  
eaten various flat breads, chickpeas and lentils.  
in some shops, barbers, sign-painters, cooks, musicians  
know my name and want me to join them for tea—  
this is no secret city, not the first time  
i've seen you- sang along  
*you look like a city but you feel like religion to me*  
*oh!* i want to be able to leave you  
and there is nowhere else to go.  
i want you inside me, whispering  
through my pores in my sleep.

i walked home talking loudly, holding my pants in place,  
past curses and kisses, and it never did rain.  
woke in a pool of sweat, an unseasonably hot morning.  
today, the subway like so many times,  
waiting above ground, swooshing around phlegm  
in our cheeks before letting go,  
launching it into quivering space.  
today like so many times  
i want to know just what you did to me,  
but i cannot see everything.

Ekoko Omadeke

*exerpted from Domestic Scenery*

To grandma, juice was fruit water.  
Women who wore pants lived  
in men's shadows and irons hiked  
with each morsel of coal.  
In the old video of her first  
American Christmas,  
she unwrapped 50 yards of Superwax,  
the zenith of Congolese textiles  
like a child does a new puppy;  
pressed the pattern cloth  
to her body waiting for the woven trees  
and animals to sprout limbs  
and notice her smile.  
We were children  
who smiled and waved  
at the video camera all together  
while she stood still as a tripod  
rooted in the days of gunpowder  
when any sudden movement  
translates into an illegible smear.

\*\*

Crime scene investigators find  
a woman stretched on her  
back like a number.

The red waxy line smeared  
near her midsection means  
subtraction; the loss  
of a girl who grew

into darkness like a shadow;  
an innocent iron broken  
from absorbing great heat.  
Implicate the local crime family.

There are always  
men with pinstriped pants,  
accents, and a night club  
for the police to question.

*"Was she your girlfriend?"*  
*"We were never together."*

### Acknowledgements

"Deep Blue" first appeared in Volume 3 of *Reconfigurations*.

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### Contributors

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Meghan Guss, originally from Iowa, teaches high school English in Brooklyn. Let her know if you need a trumpet player for anything.

Matt Reeck lives in Brooklyn. His third chapbook, *Midwinter*, is soon available from Fact-Simile Press in Sante Fe. msreeck@yahoo.com

Christopher Hirschmann is the nom de folie of Chris Brandt, who is a writer, translator, teacher, carpenter, furniture designer, theatre person, and a couldn't-be-prouder uncle of one niece and two of the other kind.

Kyle Schlesinger's *What You Will* is forthcoming from New Lights Press early in 2010.

Marty Northrop will surely agree to play soccer or to take your beagle for a walk around the block, so just ask. He often has beans, toast, eggs, and coffee for breakfast. mnorthrop@fordham.edu

Emma Alabaster's grandmother doesn't understand— why would her son first, and now her granddaughter, choose to live in the Brooklyn that she happily escaped in the 1940s? Holler at this BK-based musician/poet/educator/freelancer: emmaalabaster.com emmalabaster@gmail.com

Ekoko Omadeke is a Virginia native who refuses to get a NY state ID. She currently pursues an MFA from New York University and curates the Southern Writers Reading Series at Happy Ending Lounge. Ekoko lives and writes in Brooklyn.



